7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

hilltop with a digging stick. He knelt and prayed, asking for rain. At that very moment, the rain came. He put the seeds in the holes he made, and from then on people have been planting in the hills.

Other saints are charged with providing rainfall. The saint of greatest importance in this respect is Santo Tomás, the patron saint of Oxchuk. Some Indians have gone to the church there to light a candle and ask for rain, and on their return the rains came. During an extended drought in August 1967, over one hundred people walked to Oxchuk to pray for rain. The people of Tzoʔontahal are somewhat bitter about the Oxchuqueños' neglect of Santo Tomás since over half of the town has converted to Protestantism. Whenever there is a drought, they blame it on the failure of the people of Oxchuk to take care of Santo Tomás.

In addition to the Catholic saints, the ancestor spirits help man to watch over the land. They are responsible for giving the rains in the planting period and early growing season. The fiesta on the Day of the Cross (Chapter 1) is primarily a plea for rain. Until the 1950s, the curers would hold a celebration at the Cave of the Ancestors to ask for rain during a drought. The waning belief in the presence of the ancestor spirits in the town has meant that there is less attention given to such fiestas. Some go to seek the ancestors in Chiapa de Corzo in the cave in which they are supposed to reside, as the following story illustrates:

One time my three brothers-in-law went to Chiapas to ask the ancestors for better crops. When they arrived there, nobody knew where the cave was. They said only a certain mayordomo there could find it.

Another time, two of the prayer-reciters went to the cave. They talked to the guard of the cave, saying, "May we speak to our ancestors?" The guard said, "Are you prepared? Did you bring two liters of trago? The ancestors like to drink."

The prayer-reciters went to get two liters of trago and all three drank it. While they were drinking, they saw a cow and chickens appear. The guardian said that if they came back in May with "food" for the ancestors —candles, incense, and firecrackers—they would get rich crops. I think the prayer-reciters succeeded because now they have a cow and chickens and a horse. They are afraid of the envy of their neighbors.

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

The informant failed to mention the following actions which I observed:

1. In raising the figure of Christ on the cross, the four regidores, in this context called *apultol* (probably from apostles), entered the church. Two of them stood at the head of the cross to receive the image raised from below by the other two.
2. The image was always handled with cloths so that no one's hand would be in contact with the surface.
3. The priest, standing behind a cloth screen, guided the figure up on the cross.
4. The priest gave a sermon about the significance of Easter and the life and death of Christ. He spoke of the crime of the Jews in killing Christ.[6]

In comparing the elicited and observed accounts, one can see clearly the censoring of the priest's role in the perception of the people. Even while the ceremony is in process, they ignore his appeals. For example, as the body of Christ was lowered from the cross, the priest exhorted the congregation to cry and give vent freely to their emotions in this most holy moment. There was no response from the audience, even after he waited several moments, pleading with them again not to feel embarrassment at their show of emotion, and becoming visibly annoyed at their impassivity. Finally, a woman dressed in Ladina clothing, rewarded him with the stylized wail of mourning.

Observation of the ceremony reveals evidence of attitude and belief coded in the staging, the costuming, the postures and gestures of respect or derision which cannot be elicited. Each element is an interpretative comment by those who direct and act the play. We are told that the Jew is the anti-Christ, but we learn that he is also a Ladino through his clothing, the cigarette, and the horseback ride. The Indians do not state that they castrate him in hoisting him upon the church, but their comments and ac-

6. Despite the fact that the Vatican had exonerated the Jews of the guilt for the murder of Christ the year before (1965), the priest spoke of the crime of the Jews. This time lag in communicating doctrine to the hinterlands would be an interesting problem to investigate.

156 The picture of life in Amatenango and Aguacatenango is
62 not, however, from the ideological point of view of the community
754 members, spread only into sanctions of negative dimensions. There
777 are some justifications for wealth or success which are as intimate a part of the world view of the villagers as witchcraft is, because witchcraft has a positive counterpart: suerte (luck).

777 Suerte, as witchcraft power, is also a supernatural power given to the particular individual without the person's will having control over its possession. Some people are born with good suerte, some people with bad suerte. Some people can be "given" a particular suerte by a supernatural being[1] at some time in their life to keep until his death or for some period of time. Of course, a man cannot give his suerte away or transmit it to his children. The suerte is not a general power, but has specific dimensions. For example, a man has suerte to raise cattle, which would, then, grow and reproduce tremendously in his lifetime. But, he may very well have bad bean crops. His children, at his death,

---

[1] The suerte can be given by many different supernatural beings. Some informants say it is Dios (God), or the Virgin Mary, some say it is the Sombrerón, or owner of the deer and caves, to whom one has to promise to give one's soul at death, some others indicate that it is written in one's destiny at birth to have a particular type of suerte. The variations in the belief are many, and in a system of ideology without a Church body to create, and control the diffusion of dogma, this is to be expected.

The only organized dogma available to the villager is the local Catholic Church, but this dogma leaves out a series of beliefs such as suerte and brujería as unacceptable. Therefore, these beliefs are only transmitted informally, together with folk-tales, myths and the like. Because dreams are of great importance in relation to these beliefs, each individual can contribute, through his personal dream experiences, to the general pool of ideology of the community. Therefore, tales and myth, dream experiences, the "true" stories that people are told in the evening by particular relatives or friends, all tend to produce a mushrooming of alternative versions of the same or similar sets of beliefs.